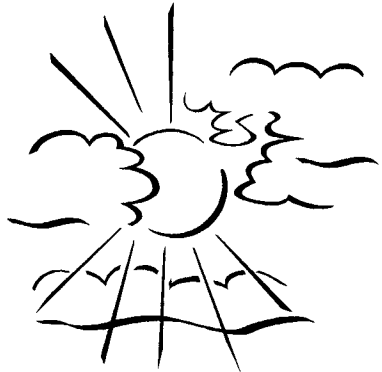


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Articles in Today's Clips

Thursday, July 14, 2005

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REPORT NO. 134 VOLUME 44 WEDNESDAY, JULY 13, 2005

HOUSE POSTPONES VOTES ON TAXES, SECURITIZATION

The House dropped its plans Wednesday to hold final passage votes on proposals to overhaul business taxes and sell the state's annual tobacco settlement payments for an immediate, lump-sum payment, delaying action as negotiations on both issues continue.

Democratic Governor Jennifer Granholm and House Republicans have competing proposals on how to change the Single Business Tax. Ms. Granholm and members of the House from both parties also are negotiating bills designed to diversify the state's economy, an initiative that would be funded through the selling of three-quarters of the tobacco settlement payments.

House Republicans had scheduled their Single Business Tax bills for votes Wednesday along with the economic diversification and securitization bills. But House Speaker Craig DeRoche (R-Novi) decided to shelve the bills while negotiations continue in response to requests from Ms. Granholm and House Democrats.

"We are working together," Mr. DeRoche told reporters after the House session concluded. "I would like to have this done sooner rather than later. We have been passing the plans out (of committee) with the input, and in many cases support, of Democratic members, and I would like to continue to do that, so long as the delays don't further jeopardize the economic situation in Michigan."

Mr. DeRoche said it "is not an absolute" that the full House would vote next week.

House Minority Leader Dianne Byrum (D-Onondaga) said her message to Mr. DeRoche was that it would have been a mistake to pass the bills out of the House before negotiations produce a final product.

Rep. Paul Condino (D-Southfield), the lead Democrat on the tax issue, said the two parties are making progress on the major sticking point of finding replacement revenue to pay for cutting business taxes. House Republicans have said they would propose eliminating \$100 million in tax exemptions, but have not yet said which ones.

Mr. Condino said voting Wednesday when negotiations are ongoing "would have been hostile" because Republicans have pledged to look at tax exemptions.

House Republicans have called for a Single Business Tax credit for manufacturers equal to 25 percent of their personal property tax burden with a 10 percent credit for all other

businesses except utilities ([HB 4972](#)). The House GOP proposal also would change the SBT's formula to base it 100 percent on sales ([HB 4973](#)).

The House GOP plan also would phase out the cost of providing health insurance as part of the way the SBT is calculated. It would reduce the SBT rate by 0.05 percent each year – if May revenue estimating conferences estimate that SBT revenue for the current fiscal year exceeds SBT revenue for the previous fiscal year by at least \$80 million – from 1.9 percent to a minimum of 1.7 percent ([HB 4922](#)). The bill also would cut in half over five years the alternative business tax paid by those businesses below the threshold to pay the SBT.

Democratic Governor Jennifer Granholm proposed a plan that would cut the Single Business Tax rate to 1.2 percent from 1.9 percent, change the tax's formula to base it 100 percent on sales, provide a Single Business Tax credit for manufacturers equal to 35 percent of their personal property tax burden, end some current credits like those for unincorporated companies and create a 2 percent tax on insurance companies' premiums.

In contrast to the tax increase on insurers, House Republicans propose to make up the revenue lost under their plan for the 2005-06 fiscal year by eliminating \$100 million in yet to be identified tax loopholes and collecting \$32 million in interest earnings from the securitization of three-quarters of the state's share of the national tobacco settlement. They also would transfer \$10 million from the Comprehensive Transportation Fund, embrace a Senate proposal to increase tax auditors to collect an additional \$56 million in revenue and use the remaining \$70 million in unsecuritized tobacco settlement revenue.

Earlier Wednesday, the House Commerce Committee approved the securitization bill and one of the bills that would set up how some of the securitized tobacco settlement revenue would be spent ([HB 5047](#), [HB 5048](#)).

Prior to the committee's vote, Mitch Bean, director of the House Fiscal Agency, told the committee an exact estimate of how big the lump-sum payment from securitizing the tobacco settlement could not be made. House Republicans have said that selling three-quarters of the annual settlement payments would result in \$3 billion in revenues to the state.

But Mr. Bean said that if the state sold the entire settlement, the state would receive between \$3.2 billion to \$4 billion, depending on the market. Under securitization, the state sells the rights to its annual tobacco settlement payments to investors. To raise the money to pay the state the lump sum amount, the investors sell bonds. The desire in the market for those bonds determines how much money the state receives.

Another variable in the \$3.2 billion to \$4 billion range is whether the bonds are taxable or nontaxable. If all of the bonds are taxable, then the state would receive \$3.2 billion, said [Rep. Bill Huizenga \(R-Zeeland\)](#), the committee chair and bill sponsor. At this point, Mr. Huizenga said he expects two-thirds of the bonds to be nontaxable and one-third taxable.

Bob Swanson, deputy director of the Department of Labor and Economic Growth, told the committee that the department is neutral on the bills because they have “a number of technical problems.” Ms. Granholm has said she supports the broad concept of securitization to fund economic diversification.

Mr. Huizenga disputed Mr. Swanson’s assessment, but – much like the comments of legislators on the tax plan – said, “I think there’s an understanding that this is a work in progress.”

Surprisingly, Mr. Huizenga’s co-author of the securitization/economic investment plan, Rep. Andy Dillon (D-Redford), abstained on the bills. Mr. Dillon said he continues to support the direction of the legislation, but would abstain in deference to the administration and ongoing negotiations.

On the bill to set up the fund to receive securitized money for research and development, the committee cast 13 votes for the bill with four abstaining. Rep. Andy Meisner (D-Ferndale) and Rep. Steve Tobocman (D-Detroit) joined all Republicans in support although Mr. Meisner said he cast a “yes” vote in a nod to continuing negotiations.

The securitization bill saw only Republican votes in favor while all Democrats abstained.

Securitization: Big word and big risks

Jackson Citizen Patriot

Thursday, July 14, 2005

Let's simplify a complex issue -- securitization of Michigan's remaining entitlement from the tobacco settlement.

What is securitization? It's the equivalent, in state government circles, of a get-rich-fast scheme. It's like cashing in your fat pension fund, intended to protect you long term, to buy a shiny new SUV. It's just what most parents try to teach their kids not to go for -- instant gratification. And that's the gist of securitization.

Now, what's the context for this issue? Each year, Michigan receives about \$285 million from the tobacco settlement. Since the revenue stream is certain, there are investors anxious to do a big favor for a state like Michigan. The state would sell rights to its annual payments to such investors, who would then sell bonds, the proceeds of which would be given to the state in a lump-sum payment. The state gets its big money now; investors get a certain stream of money, which they can use for investments and reap handsome returns.

If Michigan were to sell, or securitize, its entire share of annual payments, the proceeds would amount to about \$4 billion. Last week a bill was introduced in the House to sell three-quarters of the settlement money to get \$3 billion. House Republicans, who are pushing the measure, would use \$1 billion of the money to lure cutting-edge businesses to Michigan, set aside \$1.5 billion to create an endowment for the Merit Award program, and put \$500 million into the Medicaid trust fund. Gov. Jennifer Granholm has said she supports securitization for the investment in the economy, and that she would not oppose using the money for the Merit Awards.

Still, while securitization is attractive for obvious reasons, it is not uniformly popular. Sixteen states have securitized for various reasons. All of the states, however, acted prior to 2003, when this bubble nearly burst. An Illinois lawsuit award against a major tobacco company nearly caused the company to default on its tobacco-settlement payments. The award was later reduced, but investors realized there was more risk to the scheme than they thought. To appease nervous investors, New York state had to pledge its general fund to back up the tobacco payments.

The very notion of pledging Michigan's general fund as collateral for Wall Street investors makes us wonder what House Republicans are thinking.

There is also sharp opposition from health organizations. Michigan ranks dead last among the states in use of settlement proceeds for health purposes. Health groups see securitization as a risky strategy for use of funds that have been misspent from the start.

Since there seems to be a consensus among Republican leaders and the governor that securitization could be a good thing for Michigan, we'll go this far in lending our qualified support:

Protect the general fund. Don't pledge it to guarantee the stream of tobacco money over the years.

Don't use any proceeds from the securitization to bail out the state budget or even to support or sustain ongoing state programs such as Medicaid or the Merit Award program.

The only use of the proceeds we could support is to invest in the state's economy -- along the lines of the governor's \$2 billion bonding proposal to attract cutting-edge, high-tech businesses to Michigan. This kind of investment would truly be worth the risk.

The Jackson Citizen Patriot

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Health and Pregnancy

Detroit Free Press Editorial

July 14, 2005

Gov. Jennifer Granholm has offered a multi-tiered, commonsense initiative that should appeal to anyone interested in women's health and lowering the state's abortion rate.

The governor's Blueprint for Preventing Unintended Pregnancies would reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies, improve women's health -- and the health of their babies -- and inject equity into insurance coverage.

The plan includes getting federal approval to cover contraceptives for women on Medicaid; requiring companies that provide prescription care to include birth control coverage; and offering parents help talking to their children about making good decisions to delay sex, and to protect themselves when they start. Abstinence-only programs may sound ideal but have proved to result in risky behavior once young people stop just saying no.

Mandating birth-control coverage is already raising eyebrows. But this is not about creating a state of wanton women; it's about protecting women's health. Despite protestations from the Michigan Catholic Conference that the plan would amount to "treating a woman's fertility as a disease," medical care shouldn't be disease-driven, but health-driven.

Women who don't get pregnant until they are adults, and who space their children a decent distance apart, have healthier pregnancies, motherhoods and babies. Birth control can help women with a host of other issues. And if women don't get pregnant when they don't want to, they don't even consider abortion.

Covering birth control is cheaper, too, for employers and Medicaid than covering multiple pregnancies and children. That doesn't mean companies or the government should discourage women from having children they want; they should just help women not get pregnant when they don't want to.

It's impractical to think that adult women should deny themselves intimate pleasures, and it's hypocritical in a society that vaunts drugs that help men with erectile dysfunction.

The reproductive system is an integral part of a woman's health; tending to it with adequate care should no longer be treated as optional.

LOCAL COMMENT: Pregnancy plan misses the mark

Granholm takes wrong turn with push to mandate contraceptive coverage

July 14, 2005

BY JANET E. SMITH

Gov. Jennifer Granholm is to be congratulated for attempting to reduce the number of unintended pregnancies through abstinence-based sex education. But her support of mandated contraceptive coverage by health care plans covering drug prescriptions conflicts with a truly abstinence-based program.

Why is it that programs to persuade young people not to drink and drive don't include the "backup" advice: "If you are going to drink and drive, consume drinks that have a low alcohol content -- or, at least, drive slowly"? Or why not: "Don't drink and drive, but if you decide to anyway, the drinks are on us. In fact, we will mandate that those who don't agree with this policy also pay for your drinks." Hey, we could buy low-nicotine cigarettes for those who are going to smoke anyway -- and mandate that others pay for them.

Does anybody think that there would be fewer drunken drivers and fewer smokers under such programs?

Similarly, Granholm's program sends out a confusing message: "Don't have sex outside of marriage. But if you do, use contraceptives. We'll buy them for you -- and also mandate that those who don't agree with this policy buy contraceptives for you."

Does this policy strike anyone else as counterproductive, and even unjust?

The widespread promotion and provision of contraceptives inevitably nurtures a cultural acceptance of sex outside of marriage -- precisely what any culture friendly to children should be trying to reduce and prevent.

In 1960, before the pill was available, the unwed pregnancy rate in the United States was 6%; now it is 31%. Figure it out. Contraceptives facilitate sex outside of marriage; sex outside of marriage with or without contraceptives is irresponsible.

Remember: All contraceptives have a significant failure rate as used in the real world. Marriage is the only reliable protection against unwed pregnancy.

Granholm's proposal promises to deepen profound divisions in our culture concerning abortion and sexuality. Chemical contraceptives and the IUD sometimes work by preventing the implantation of an embryonic human being. Many good citizens believe that human life should be protected from fertilization. Forcing businesses and individuals to support policies that cause early-term abortions violates the consciences of many mainstream Americans. Moreover, fertility is not a disease; mandating coverage of elective drugs is unjust; would Granholm support mandated payment for steroids or breast enhancement surgery?

Granholm speculates savings of \$27 million a year if only 10% of unintended pregnancies are prevented. Well, those are tax savings; what about the increased costs for businesses and reduced wages of employees? Did Granholm calculate the costs for the health problems resulting from contraceptive use? Women often require prescriptions to fight the side effects of contraceptives, such as depression or migraines. Moreover, chemical contraceptives are no protection against sexually transmitted diseases -- some of which have fatal effects -- such as the lethal HIV and the human papilloma virus, a leading cause of cervical and other cancers. Some of the most common

STDs cause pelvic inflammatory disease, a leading cause of infertility and ectopic pregnancy (a possibly life-threatening condition). Treatment for all these conditions can be very costly.

The only sensible way to combat unwed pregnancy is to promote the facts, values and behavior that persuade individuals to abstain from sex before marriage. Such persuasion will only happen, however, if young people are led to see that abstaining from premarital sex is a terrific if not indispensable preparation for healthy marriage. Having control of one's sexual powers -- preserving them as a gift for one's future spouse -- is a wholly attractive concept that will protect many important goods in life, not the least of which are children growing up with a mother and father in the home.

Meanwhile, the best way to help the married avoid unintended pregnancies is to teach methods of natural family planning -- completely healthy methods, ones that strengthen relationships and cost nothing to use.

Those who seek to reduce the number of unwed pregnancies, a true scourge of our culture, truly need to rethink their belief that increased access to contraceptives is a part of the solution rather than the problem. I believe those promoting contraception are pouring fuel on the fire, and we all will pay the price.

JANET E. SMITH of Ypsilanti holds the Father Michael J. McGivney Chair of Life Ethics at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit. Write to her in care of the Free Press Editorial Page, 600 W. Fort St., Detroit, MI 48226.

Mom arranges statewide sex-ed lessons for parents Farmington Hills woman coordinates program to help them discuss the topic with their middle school kids.

By Kendra Snyder / The Detroit News

July 14, 2005

FARMINGTON HILLS -- Like most parents, Barb Flis was embarrassed to talk about sex with her children. Now, the Farmington Hills resident is teaching other parents how to do it. "Think about your kid, and if you don't have that conversation, you're leaving them unarmed," she said. Flis recently was appointed by Gov. Jennifer Granholm to coordinate the Talk Early, Talk Often program, which aims to make parents of middle school students more comfortable discussing sex with their children.

Starting this fall, the pilot program will send facilitators across the state to conduct 60 free, 90-minute workshops.

For Flis, 52, a mother of two, it's a program she never envisioned leading.

"If someone had said, 'Barb, what do you want to do in the future?' I couldn't have written this," she said.

The key of the program is to teach parents to stay calm and listen to their children's questions and concerns about sex, Flis said.

The workshops, which use role-playing, will put participants in groups of three, with one acting as the child, one as the parent and the third as an observer.

"When a child asks, 'Mom, can I get pregnant the first time I have sex?' the natural thing for a parent is their alarm goes off," Flis said.

"What we really want to do is hit the snooze and probe into their question. We want the parents to say, 'That's an interesting question, why would you ask that?' If your alarm clock goes off, the child's not going to want to ask that question, or anything like it, again."

Troy parent Lynn Hipp's three daughters already have been through the Troy school district's sex education program. But Hipp said she would have felt more comfortable if the parent program was available when her children were young.

"It would have been nice to have something, so you don't feel so like, 'Gee, what do I say now,' " she said, adding that there's still the need for school sex education programs because "sometimes, (children) don't listen to parents."

Flis said the goal is to attract at least 1,500 parents to the workshops, but she hopes the number will be closer to 3,000.

The governor's program falls in line with the position of the National Parent-Teacher Association, which has its own initiative encouraging parents to start early with sex education.

"It's something needed," said National PTA spokesman James Martinez. "The well-being of children is primarily the responsibility of the home."

Flis became interested in children's health issues in the late 1980s, when her two daughters were in elementary school in Northville. Her involvement with school sex education started when her oldest daughter, now 25, was in middle school.

"I thought it wouldn't be a bad thing to learn about this," Flis said. Through the education department, she's held sex education workshops for parents since 1999 to explain sex education taught in the classroom and how to address the topic at home.

But Flis said she wasn't always public speaker material.

"I was an observer for so many years," she said. "When you're not holding Ph.D. degrees and you don't feel qualified, you don't always speak. It took me a long time to find my voice.

"I thought, 'are you going to overcome this discomfort, or are you going to be inhibitive and not talk about it?' "

Flis chose to talk.

"Our babies don't keep," Flis said. "That's the difference in attitude between parents and everyone else. We want them to have it now, because they don't get to repeat being 7, or being 13."

You can reach Kendra Snyder at (248) 647-8605 or ksnyder@detnews.com.

Thursday, July 14, 2005

Health groups receive grants Two county agencies will use money to target obesity, diabetes and infant mortality.

By Mike Martindale / The Detroit News

SOUTHFIELD -- Two Oakland County health agencies are among 12 groups across the state that will share \$1.1 million in grants to reduce health disparities in ethnic and racial minorities. Gov. Jennifer Granholm announced this week that 12 programs statewide will include specific emphasis on asthma, lead, infant mortality, cancer, genomics, diabetes, hypertension and healthy lifestyles.

Those conditions are particularly problematic for Michigan's minority populations, health officials said. Grants of varying amounts will be spent within the next year, Granholm said.

"While the overall health of Michigan citizens has improved over the last several years, the health outcomes for minority populations leave room for improvement," Granholm said.

"It is our hope that these new projects will ensure that all of Michigan's citizens, regardless of race or ethnic background, are on the road to better health."

Under one program, to be supervised by the Michigan Department of Community Health, St. John Community Health in Southfield and Detroit will receive a grant to focus on diabetes and obesity.

The Oakland Livingston Human Services Agency in Pontiac has received a grant directed at infant mortality. Mortality rates among blacks in Pontiac were found to be two to five times higher than white babies, according to the Oakland County Health Division.

"We're excited to be selected for this program," said Lynn Crotty, director of child development for OLHSA, who said the program will follow a successful Head Start program for expectant mothers.

"We plan to add staff to this program and have already identified at least 30 women in Pontiac who will be visited in their homes, be provided proper nutrition practices and the help of family support specialists," Crotty said.

A survey by the county found that among at-risk mothers, about 21.4 deaths per 1,000 live births were recorded three years ago. That number dropped to 9.8 deaths per 1,000 births after community health nurses provide in-home counseling. Whites recorded a rate of 6.2 deaths per 1,000.

You can reach Mike Martindale at (248) 647-7226 or mmartindale@detnews.com.

Wednesday, July 13, 2005

Plan offers small businesses health insurance Wayne Co., nonprofit, four health care systems join to provide coverage for uninsured patients.

By Maureen Feighan / The Detroit News

Four local health systems are teaming up with Wayne County to offer a low-cost health insurance program to small businesses, in an effort to address the growing number of uninsured Wayne County residents. The program, called Wayne County Four Star Health, splits three ways a \$168 monthly premium for qualified enrollees among the employer, employee and a nonprofit community group. Enrollees are restricted to what health systems they can use, but are not required to have a primary care doctor.

Rick Nowakowski, the Four Star administrator, said the program is similar to one Wayne County already offers called HealthChoice . But with 250,000 uninsured residents in Wayne County, he said there's enough need for both programs to co-exist.

"(Lack of insurance) is a problem across the country," Nowakowski said. "With the way the cost of health insurance has increased over the past 15 years due to increased technology and the aging of the population, it's increasingly gotten less affordable for a number of businesses." Bob Cardoni, owner of Cardoni's Bar & Grill in Detroit, knows how challenging health insurance can be.

The Dearborn resident used to offer his employees insurance through Wayne's HealthChoice program until he lost eligibility because he didn't have enough employees who wanted coverage. Cardoni has roughly six employees but only a couple want health care coverage.

"It's a big challenge," Cardoni said. "It's expensive, especially for small businesses. You're not talking about Ford Motor Company, where you have deep pockets."

Created by St. John Health System, the Detroit Medical Center, Henry Ford Health System and Oakwood Healthcare System along with Wayne County, the Four Star program will cater to small businesses with between two and 49 employees. To qualify, businesses must have two-thirds of their workforce living in Detroit, pay \$12 an hour or less to half their staff, and meet other criteria.

Nowakowski said Four Star is accepting applications now and enrollment will begin in September. He expects to enroll up to 5,000 uninsured employees in its first year.

What's next

Applications are being accepted for the Wayne County Four Star Health program. For information, call (866) 780-6655.

You can reach Maureen Feighan at (248) 647-7416 or mfeighan@detnews.com

IN A MINUTE

Detroit Free Press
July 14, 2005

CORRECTIONS

Escape by teens prompts sanctions at justice center

The Macomb County Juvenile Justice Center in Mt. Clemens will have to submit a corrective action plan to the state and operate with a provisional license for six months in response to an escape in May.

County spokesman Phil Frame said the state notified the county this week of the sanctions for not having adequate supervision in the center's gym when four teens escaped.

The teens -- including Eric Schorling, 16, of Romeo, who pleaded guilty earlier this year to attempted murder in the stabbing of his ex-girlfriend at Romeo High School -- were arraigned Monday.

The county is still looking for a permanent director for the center, and a new one could be tapped by the county commission tonight.

By Nate Trela

Gap between wanting, getting long-term care

Thursday, July 14, 2005

By Sharon Emery Lansing Bureau

LANSING -- There's a major disconnect in Michigan when it comes to talking about providing for the growing number of older and disabled people unable to fend for themselves, and actually doing it, advocates for those groups say.

On the one hand, nearly 80 percent of Michigan voters over age 45 responding to a recent AARP survey supported boosting state funding for home- and community-based care -- an alternative to nursing homes -- even if it meant increasing taxes.

On the other, Republican lawmakers in the House and Senate are considering cutting some \$8 million to \$10 million from the \$100 million Mi Choice program that provides in-home services, in an effort to balance the 2006 state budget. The state's long-term care budget, now at \$1.7 billion, is growing by \$80 million to \$100 million annually.

Negotiations are continuing, but the move would cut nurses and social workers who help elderly and disabled people stay at home. Some lawmakers believe those services, including client assessments and case updates, are mostly administrative.

"I can't understand where they're coming from," Sharon Gire, director of the state Office of Services to the Aging, said Wednesday.

Michigan is not alone in its dilemma as the aging, massive baby boomer population creates an urgent need for long-term care. In just 15 years, one in every six Michigan residents are expected to be over 65.

To help address those needs nationally, the AARP National Legislative Council is holding meetings in Lansing through Friday to glean ideas from policy-makers here, including the Michigan Medicaid Long-Term Care Task Force, which last month delivered its final report.

Gire served on the task force and addressed the AARP group.

Among the task force's findings was that care options need to be broadened, including expansion of the Mi Choice program. And people need one place to go for information about all long-term care options.

Consolidating programs and funding for long-term care is a nationwide trend, presenters told the AARP's Health and Long-term Care Committee.

"It's about independence, dignity and choice," said Susan Reinhard, of the Rutgers Center for State Health Policy at Rutgers University, noting that consolidation allows people to more efficiently choose among long-term care options.

Although home care costs less than nursing home care -- about \$43 a day as opposed to about \$140 a day -- committee members warned that it's not necessarily a money-saver.

"States don't spend less money, but they serve more people, which is important when it comes to meeting this demographic bubble," said Charley Reed, a member of the AARP committee.

States such as Michigan are finding that meshing programs, funding and even public perceptions on an expensive, emotional topic like long-term care is difficult.

The AARP's Michigan survey indicated, for example, that the disconnect on long-term care isn't just between the public and policy-makers. Individuals themselves are struggling to come to grips with their future care.

Thirty-six percent of the AARP survey respondents said they weren't worried at all or were worried very little about affording long-term care. The survey of 1,200 Michigan voters was conducted in May by Woelful Research Inc. Survey results are available at www.aarp.org/mi. Yet among those polled who had actual experience in paying for long-term care, nearly 80 percent said it is difficult to afford the cost.

“People are in a state of denial,” said Steve Gools, AARP Michigan state director. “They really don't know what long-term care is until they're thrown into a crisis situation.”

Contact Sharon Emery at (517) 487-8888 x236 or e-mail her at semery@boothnewspapers.com.

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Sexual contact with child leads to prison

Thursday, July 14, 2005

Special to the Gazette

PAW PAW -- A South Haven man has been sentenced to prison for sexual contact with a minor.

Van Buren County Circuit Court Judge William Buhl sentenced Joseph Henry Schultz, 48, to three to 15 years in prison for second-degree criminal sexual conduct involving sexual contact with a person under 13.

Michigan State Police had charged Schultz in connection with a March 2 incident in Geneva Township. He pleaded no contest June 21. Buhl credited him with 129 days already served.

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Molestation trial begins

Thursday, July 14, 2005

SCOTT DAVIS THE SAGINAW NEWS

A U.S. Navy ensign who served during Operation Desert Storm now is fighting for his freedom on another front.

Daniel R. Vargas, 37, formerly of Saginaw, began trial Wednesday in Saginaw County Circuit Court on charges that he fondled two young girls at the Saginaw home of a family member three or four years ago.

Prosecutors charged Vargas in June 2003 with molesting the then 11-year-old and 12-year-old girls, and authorities subsequently extradited him from Pensacola, Fla., where the ensign is stationed at Naval Hospital Pensacola.

He faces three counts of criminal sexual conduct-second degree, which carries a maximum punishment of 15 years in prison.

The girls have maintained that Vargas, an extended family member, molested them while they shared a bedroom in the Saginaw home. He says he was staying there while studying nursing at Saginaw Valley State University on an extended leave from the military.

During opening arguments before Circuit Judge Fred L. Borchard, Vargas' attorney, William Brisbois, questioned why the girls apparently waited months to tell an aunt about Vargas' conduct.

Assistant Prosecutor Kathleen A. Miller said children often simply don't know how to respond to sexual abuse.

"You have somebody that you love who is hurting you, and you don't know what to do," Miller said. "They knew what was happening. They just didn't know how to process it."

Vargas enlisted in the Navy at age 17, and he has worked as a corpsman, an emergency medical technician and a surgical technologist at a number of bases. He also served in Saudi Arabia during Operation Desert Storm in the early 1990s -- the U.S.-led campaign to evict Saddam Hussein from Kuwait.

The trial was set to resume today.

Scott Davis is a staff writer for The Saginaw News. You may reach him at 776-9665.

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Thursday, July 14, 2005

Toddler survives 4-story fall 13-month-old boy falls from apartment window, suffers a skull fracture and minor bruises.

Associated Press

BELDING -- A 13-month-old child suffered only minor injuries and is back home from the hospital after tumbling to the ground from a window in his family's fourth-floor apartment. Darrion Stark suffered a slight skull fracture, internal bruising and a black eye after falling Saturday, his mother said.

He was released Monday from DeVos Children's Hospital in Grand Rapids.

"They say it's not a bad thing," Tanya Stark said. "His skull took some of the energy instead of his brain taking it all."

The 30-year-old woman said she was talking with a neighbor Saturday morning in the living room of Stark's apartment as her two sons, Dain, 4, and Darrion, were playing in their bedroom. Around 11:30 a.m., Dain ran into the living room "with panic all over his face.

He said his baby brother was outside. That's all I heard, and I was gone."

She was the first to reach Darrion, who was lying face-down in the grass after his 40-foot fall. She feared that he was dead.

"When I rounded the corner, I was so far away, I couldn't see him moving," Stark said.

And then she picked up on a wonderful noise.

"When I heard him whimpering, it was the best sound in the world," she said.

Judge says no to resentencing Urbanawiz

Kelly Nankervis, Midland Daily News

07/14/2005

Nothing will change about Brian Urbanawiz' sentencing for sexually abusing two of his children, a judge decided Wednesday afternoon.

Urbanawiz, who was sentenced to between 35 and 60 years in prison in June 2004 after pleading guilty to four counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct, asked for reconsideration of the sentence.

The motion, by appointed appellate attorney George B. Mullison of Bay City, states there is a lack of support in the court record for Midland County Circuit Court Judge Paul J. Clulo sentencing Urbanawiz to higher than the recommended prison time and that Urbanawiz was denied effective legal representation at the time of his sentencing. It also states the way state sentencing guidelines were used is unconstitutional.

Mullison and Midland County Assistant Prosecutor Michael Garner appeared before Clulo at the hearing.

"I know this is a hard kind of thing," Mullison said of the case. "We believe your Honor has made a mistake."

Clulo disagreed.

"I spent a lot of time in the case when I sentenced Mr. Urbanawiz," he said. "I have rethought every step of this sentencing ... I am satisfied that the law has been followed."

In court, Mullison said the prosecution used eight dismissed counts -- three of first-degree criminal sexual conduct and five of second-degree criminal sexual conduct -- to show Urbanawiz was not the average offender, but those issues were the same kinds that appear in cases of other pedophiles. He also said Urbanawiz still is helping authorities catch others who are involved in similar activities.

Garner pointed out that Urbanawiz was investigated in 1994 for molesting one of his children, and was discharged from the Marines because of the allegations. At that time, investigators found there was not enough evidence to charge Urbanawiz.

Urbanawiz was arrested in December 2003 by Oakland County investigators. Officials said he and another man tried to set meetings to abuse each other's children and exchanged child pornography using the Internet.

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Men to tackle domestic abuse issue

Trace Christenson

The Enquirer

Domestic violence is not a woman's issue.

"If most abusers are men, why is this a women's event?" asked Calhoun County Prosecutor John Hallacy. "It's not a women's issue, it's a community issue."

Hallacy was speaking Wednesday to about 50 people at a kickoff for Men For Change, designed to educate Battle Creek about the role of males in domestic violence.

"When men do 90 percent of the crimes how can that be a women's issue?" Hallacy said.

The morning meeting was to inform a group mostly of men from law enforcement, business, government and other areas of the community about an upcoming program on domestic violence.

Victor Rivers, a former professional football player and a television and movie actor, will speak in Battle Creek on Aug. 11.

Rivers has written a book, "A Private Family Matter," about domestic violence in his own home. Jennifer McEldowney, executive director of SAFE Place, said the shelter for victims of domestic violence is the second largest in the state and is full.

She said 11 women are killed each day in domestic violence cases and that one in three women are victims.

"My sisters and I can't do this alone," she told the men. "We need you to stand with us."

Hallacy said police in Calhoun County received 3,300 calls for service for domestic violence cases last year.

"It is not a race issue or a poverty issue and it's not an anger issue," he said. "It's an issue of power and control. It's because men consider women a piece of property."

Both Hallacy and McEldowney said a focus of the program is to try to break the cycle of violence that shows young men it's OK to abuse women and children and to show young women that they don't have to be victims.

Men For Change Program with Victor Rivers will be 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Aug. 11 at the Heritage Dome Center in Battle Creek.

For information call S.A.F.E. Place at 965-6093.

Trace Christenson covers crime and courts. He can be reached at 966-0685 or tchrist@battlecr.gannett.com.

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Livingston Briefs
Detroit News
July 14, 2005

Livingston County

Garden tour draws crowd of 1,000

More than 1,000 people attended the LACASA Garden Tour last weekend, said the organization's director, Judy Shewach. She said the tour raised at least \$5,000 more than the \$30,000 it raised last year to fund LACASA programs, such as shelters and counseling for victims of spousal abuse and sex crimes.

The garden tour is LACASA's major fund-raiser of the year.

Homeless-shelter residents are ready, willing to work

Port Huron Times Herald

July 14, 2005

I would like to respond to the reader who inquired as to whether there were homeless handymen or carpenters living in area shelters. The answer is yes.

Many of the residents at Safe Horizons are ready, willing and capable of working in a variety of capacities. Over the years, countless skilled individuals have come through our shelter unemployed and searching for work.

As of today, both our facilities are full to capacity. Many of our clients are looking for work that will pay them a living wage.

Jobs are scarce right now in St. Clair County, and many families are feeling the crunch. At Safe Horizons, we would be thrilled if the community would pitch in and help our residents get back on their feet.

If you know of an employment opportunity, please contact Pathway Shelter at (810) 982-1020 or Carolyn's Place at (810) 985-5538. We will gladly post your job on the bulletin board.

Safe Horizons cannot make recommendations regarding specific clients or have anything to do with a business relationship between a resident and his/her employer. We can certainly, however, pass information on to the residents when an opportunity has arisen and act as a starting link between employers and those who are staying with us.

JENNY SCHULTZ

Executive Director

Safe Horizons

Port Huron, July 11

Originally published July 14, 2005

Agency to celebrate youth center today

Royal Oak facility opened in April

July 14, 2005

BY ELIZABETH SUH
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Christina Goldon-Miller left home a few weeks ago.

A 16-year-old rising senior at Shrine Catholic High School in Royal Oak, she had already moved several times over the years, each time to escape molestation and physical harm. "I was all alone ... and I wasn't safe,"

Christina said Tuesday afternoon from the Sanctuary, a temporary youth shelter in Royal Oak, run by Common Ground Sanctuary.

After living at a motel and a friend's house for two weeks, Christina found the Sanctuary through Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak.

She's found comfort and friendship at the Sanctuary, she said. "They're very supportive, and they listen," Christina said. "And the other kids here are really nice."

To provide more services to youths like Christina and others in crisis, Common Ground Sanctuary expanded in April with its Youth Outreach Center, located across the street from shelters it already runs in downtown Royal Oak.

The 2,000-square-foot center, which celebrates its grand opening today with donors and supporters, provides a place for troubled youths to visit for counseling, help getting a job, even a fresh pair of socks.

With the help of two new private grants, the center opened on a budget of \$200,000 a year.

Christina, who soon will be moving to another, longer-term shelter in Detroit, said she would like to visit the Royal Oak center after she moves.

"Right now, I don't have a job ... and I'm going to need one," she said.

"And I'm going to need a counselor, and I'm not going to have a lot of money."

The new services at the center make up Common Ground Sanctuary's latest program for young people ages 12 to 22 to be introduced today, REALife. It is to provide counseling and support services.

"Young people who would traditionally be on the streets and unavailable for us to access, have somewhere to go," said Jim Perlaki, vice president of community intervention services for Common Ground Sanctuary.

Two youth services that had long operated out of the organization's administration building in Bloomfield Township now are housed in the center with REALife.

OFFERING SHELTER

What: Common Ground Sanctuary's Youth Outreach Center for young people ages 12-22 who need help with personal or family crises.

Where: 1229 S. Washington, Royal Oak, at the corner of Washington and Kenilworth.

When: Youths can drop in 3-10 p.m.

Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays and 11 a.m.-6 p.m.

Saturdays.

Hotlines: Youths can get help or reach the center through a 24-hour crisis and referral line at 800-231-1127 or 248-456-0909.

Youths also can reach a teen 4-10 p.m. on the teen-to-teen talk line at 248-292-0194.

By Elizabeth Suh

In the street outreach program, workers talk to youths at popular outdoor hangouts, distributing food and supplies and information on how they can get help with their problems.

The other program, called transitional outreach, teaches youths how to craft strong resumes and find jobs. In fiscal year 2003-04, the street and transitional outreach programs served nearly 5,000 youths, Perlaki said.

At the center, youths looking for a job who need a callback number can use one of the mailboxes on a group phone.

They also can use a computer to search the Internet and write resumes.

There is also a counseling room with a cushy couch and a living room with games, a television and VHS movies.

They are all tools in battling homelessness, its despair, even its sometimes-glamorous appeal to independence-minded youth and moving them toward "a healthier, more productive life," said Melissa Hope, street outreach coordinator for Common Ground Sanctuary.

Contact ELIZABETH SUH at 248-351-3298 or suh@freepress.com.



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

MARIANNE UDOW
DIRECTOR

News Release

Contact: Stepheni Schlinker or
Maureen Sorbet (517) 373-7394

**Michigan Department of Human Services Summarily Suspends
the Adult Foster Care Family Home License of Anna Thatcher**

July 14, 2005

The Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS), Office of Children and Adult Licensing issued an order of summary suspension and notice of intent to revoke the license of Oakland County adult foster care family home provider Anna Thatcher, Anna's Place, 5500 Jackson Boulevard, White Lake, Michigan. This action resulted from a recent investigation of a complaint of the adult foster care family home.

The July 8, 2005, complaint investigation found violations of the Adult Foster Care Facility Licensing Act and/or adult foster care family home promulgated rules requiring "emergency action" under the Michigan Administrative Procedures Act, MCL 24.292(2).

Effective 6:00 p.m., July 15, 2005, the Summary Suspension Order prohibits Anna Thatcher from operating an adult foster care family home at 5500 Jackson Boulevard, White Lake, Michigan or at any other address or location. Accordingly, she may not accept physically handicapped, developmentally disabled, mentally ill and aged adults for care after that date and time. The order also requires Ms. Thatcher to inform all of the guardians of adults in her care that her license has been suspended and that she can no longer provide adult foster care.

Ms. Thatcher has held a license to operate an adult foster care family home since September 30, 2003. The license was for six adults.

Michigan law defines an adult foster care family home "as a private residence with the approved capacity to receive six or fewer adults to be provided with foster care for five or more days a week and for two or more consecutive weeks. The adult foster care family home licensee shall be a member of the household, and an occupant of the residence."

For more information, consult DHS Web site at www.michigan.gov/dhs.

Financially Set, Grandparents Help Keep Families Afloat, Too

By TAMAR LEWIN The New York Times

Published: July 14, 2005

When he got home from a three-day school camping trip last winter, Schuyler Duffy, a 10th grader at Friends Seminary, told his parents he had had a fantastic time and thanked them for sending him to that Manhattan private school.

They reminded him that it was his grandparents who deserved the thanks.

"We want Schuyler to appreciate that if my dad weren't paying the tuition, we probably wouldn't have been able to swing it," said Schuyler's mother, Christine Wade.

Schuyler's grandparents, who live in Oakland, Calif., cushion their grandson's life in other ways, too, paying for his summer French program in Nova Scotia and helping with the purchase of an apartment when his family was evicted from a rent-stabilized apartment in Tribeca.

It has become familiar news that grandparents are rearing millions of American children whose parents are lost to drugs, mental illness or prison. What has been less noticed - and less studied - is that even where the parents are present and functioning, grandparents play important roles in their grandchildren's lives. Some, like Ms. Wade's parents, cover the costs for tuition and real estate down payments. Others pay for summer camps, family vacations and braces. And some, with more young mothers working, care for the grandchildren a day a week or more.

For many American families, intergenerational help is now moving in a new direction. "Thirty, 40 years ago, the money went up: you helped your grandparents, you bought them this or that, they might have moved in with you," said Timothy M. Smeeding, a professor of public policy at the Maxwell School of Syracuse University. "But now, all the money comes down. Most elderly people today are better off than they thought they would be, with the booming stock market of the 1990's, the rising value of homes and the changes in Social Security. Meanwhile, their kids are worse off than they thought they would be. So grandparents help out."

Vern Bengtson, a sociologist and gerontologist at the University of Southern California, says the growing involvement of grandparents has been just as dramatic a change in American family life as the unraveling of the nuclear family. While sociologists in recent decades have bemoaned the high divorce rate and the percentage of children born to single mothers, Professor Bengtson said, they have for the most part overlooked the emergence of grandparents as an important resource for family support and stability.

"For many Americans, multigenerational bonds are becoming more important than nuclear family ties for well-being and support over the course of their lives," he said.

There is, of course, nothing new about grandparents helping to support their children's families; one way or another, grandparents have always pitched in. But as demographic changes have reshaped life paths both for older people and their adult children, the influence of grandparents has expanded.

Perhaps because American culture places such emphasis on independence, many people express discomfort about discussing intergenerational help given or received. In dozens of interviews,

grandparents said they did not want their names used because they worried that it would embarrass their children or did not want their grandchildren to know what they were paying for. "You'll have to ask my son whether he's comfortable having this in the newspaper," a Manhattan grandmother said.

That son said no; like many others in the middle generation, he did not want it known that he was not his family's sole support.

The near-taboo on the subject, Professor Bengtson said, indicates a cultural lag, with the prevailing norms and attitudes trailing far behind what is actually going on.

The very presence of grandparents in their grandchildren's lives is far more common than it used to be. The likelihood that a 20-year-old these days will have a living grandmother (91 percent) is higher than the likelihood that a 20-year-old in 1900 had a living mother (83 percent), according to an analysis by Peter R. Uhlenberg, a professor at the University of North Carolina. And, while 40 years ago, 29 percent of Americans over 65 lived below the poverty line, by 2003 poverty among the elderly had declined by nearly two-thirds.

At the same time, this generation of 20- and 30-somethings are taking longer to finish their education and reach self-sufficiency. "Our culture has changed so that education is priced so high, and lasts so long, that this phenomenon of economic dependency lasts much longer than it used to," said Professor Bengtson, himself a grandfather who goes to Santa Barbara each week to spend a day or two with his year-old granddaughter, Zoe Paloma Lozano.

Professor Bengtson has measured the growing involvement of grandparents with the college students he teaches. For 20 years, he has been giving his students a questionnaire on how they are financing college; in just the last few years, grandparents' contributions have displaced jobs and borrowing and moved into third place, after parental help and scholarships.

With tuition edging toward \$30,000 a year, many Manhattan private schools have also noticed an increase in support from grandparents. At Trevor Day School, Donald D. Mordecai, assistant head for finance and operations, said the school was seeing more checks from grandparents in recent years.

"I would say anecdotally that over the last three years, as the tuition's gone up, we began to see more grandparents sending in the checks," Mr. Mordecai said. "I'd guess that maybe 15 to 20 percent of the kids, especially the younger ones, have tuition paid by their grandparents."

For wealthy grandparents, tuition payments can be a good estate-planning device. Under so-called 529 plans, Martin L. Greenberg, an accountant at Rosen, Seymour, Shapss, Martin & Company, said, a grandparent could contribute \$55,000 toward a grandchild's college tuition without triggering any gift tax. And private-school tuition paid directly to the school does not count as a gift.

"My father pays tuition for the girls, and I'm just grateful beyond belief," said Sunny Bates, who has one daughter at the Dalton School in Manhattan and another joining her there this year. "I think that's incredibly common. You have all these people who grew up in New York when it wasn't so ridiculously expensive, and are now in careers in the arts, or the nonprofits, that don't pay very much, and they couldn't possibly give their children the kind of life they had without some help."

In both older generations, a few of those interviewed confessed an unhappy undercurrent to their intergenerational help. A few grandparents admitted feeling that their continuing financial help had spoiled their children and left them with an unseemly sense of entitlement.

"I'm hearing a little more from my grandson these days, and I know it's because they're about to ask me to pay his college tuition," said one Manhattan grandmother, wearily. "I'll do it, like I've always done everything for them. But I don't think it's been so good for them."

And some adult children can feel infringed on, when the grandmother who comes to care for the baby two days a week criticizes the mother's child-rearing, or the grandparents who make the down payment offer forceful suggestions about decorating the apartment.

"I take the money, I'm grateful, but I also feel like it keeps me under their thumb in a way that doesn't feel good," said one woman whose in-laws pay for her 10-year-old's private school tuition, camp, and tutoring. "And I think it makes it harder to say no when they ask us to visit or do things with them. It's somehow like they're calling the shots in our lives."

Still, in many families, grandparents are the secret ingredient that make the difference between a life of struggle and one of relative ease.

In a posting last year on the Web site of the Berkeley Parents Network, which does not include names, one mother asked why her own husband's salary of \$80,000 did not seem to be enough to pay for the kind of life her neighbors had. "Where are you getting all this money??" she asked.

"Interesting question and one I have had myself many, many times," said one of the responses.

"The way everyone I know is 'doing it' (nice cars, expensive houses, vacations, 'best' schools, etc.) is with money from their parents and grandparents. Seriously. Those down payments come from grandma and grandpa, and so does private school for the kids. Once I realized that (because friends let it 'slip') it all started to make more sense to me."

In New York City, Sid Whelan and Lisa Waller and their daughters, Genevieve, 6, and Gabrielle, 2, get different kinds of help from the two sets of grandparents.

Ms. Waller's parents, George and Lula Nunley, moved to New York from Chicago not long after Genevieve was born. At first, the Nunleys had their own apartment, in the same building as the Whelan/Waller family. But there was a constant flow between the apartments, so Mr. Whelan, a real estate agent and musician, suggested that they buy a Harlem townhouse big enough for all of them.

Mr. Whelan's parents, who are divorced, helped with the purchase.

"My dad gave us a bridge loan, and my mom gave us an interest-only loan," Mr. Whelan said.

"They've helped with tuition and music lessons too." Ms. Waller's parents now live on the top floor of the townhouse.

"Obviously in the back of my head, I think I should be able to do it all on my own," Mr. Whelan said, "and at times I do feel guilty for getting so much help. But at the same time, I think it's good that the kids know their grandparents and know what they're doing for them."

Lansing State Journal
Letters to the editor

July 14, 2005

Protect the kids

The June 30 Viewpoint from Marianne Udow and Rep. Chris Kolb illustrates concerns shared by the Michigan Council for Maternal and Child Health regarding this state budget. Our board is gravely concerned that this budget is being balanced to the detriment of poor families, particularly children, in order to finance corporate tax cuts.

The Michigan Constitution states, "The Legislature shall impose taxes sufficient with other resources to pay the expenses of state government."

If we truly value children, then our state government must invest in evidence-based programs that promote healthy, safe, emotionally and educationally competent children. Cutting children off cash assistance, limiting preventive health care, and placing children in less than quality foster care or child care will undermine their ability to become productive, taxpaying adults. It is time we put the balance back into our balanced budget.

Sally Stinson
Lansing